SOPHISTICATED SUSPENSE
SWAMP THING
42
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1935
50
DC
1985
BY
ALAN MOORE,
STEPHEN BISSETTE
AND JOHN TOTLEBEN

HE TRIED...

(A CENTURY OF STARING AT THE CEILING, LONGING TO STRETCH, TO YAWN WITHOUT THE JAW FALLING OFF, LONGING TO RUB THE COBWEBS FROM YOUR SOCKETS WITH YELLOWED KNUCKLES.)

... AND TRIED...

(A DECADE COUNTING THE NAILS, OVER AND OVER; A DECADE STUDYING THE GROWTH OF A SINGLE FUNGUS; FIFTY YEARS STRUGGLING TO REMEMBER WHAT PEACHES SMELLED LIKE.

... AND TRIED...

(GENERATION AFTER GENERATION OF BEETLES PASS BEFORE YOUR UNBLINKING GAZE. YOU WATCH THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THEIR MINIATURE DYNASTIES, MAKING UP NAMES FOR EACH CHARACTER, OFTEN REPEATING YOURSELF.)

... BUT IT WAS NO GOOD.

HE COULDN'T SLEEP.

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ABOVE THE SUNBURNED TOPSOIL HE SENSED THE NIGHT AIR; COLD AND SWEET WITH THE PROMISE OF A WIND.

(BELOW, ALL THE BITTER YEARS RECALLING THE SQUANDERED BREATHS THAT YOU DID NOT SAVOR, BELIEVING THEM TO BE INFINITE...)

R.I.P.
R.D. & I.D.
PRATT
1747
1849

FINALLY, HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER.

(FRUSTRATED, SLEEPLESS... FORGOTTEN ABOUT? DOES ANYONE STILL REMEMBER? A FRAGMENT OF HISTORY, BURIED, OBSOLETE, DEAD, LONGING TO BE A SEED, TO HAVE POSSIBILITIES AGAIN, TO SEND BRITTLE WHITE SHOOTS UP INTO THE COLD MOONLIGHT...)

TOM STALER

HE GOT UP.

(OH, IF ONLY! IF ONLY YOU COULD! TO BLOSSOM FROM THE GRAVELOAM, A HARD WHITE PUMPKIN NODDING ATOP ITS DISCOLORED STEM. TO BE CERTAIN OF THAT PERFECT DAY WHEN THE BONEGROVES YIELD UP THEIR NEGLECTED HARVEST...)

IT WAS A FINE NIGHT. MANY OTHER PEOPLE WERE AWAKE, TOUCHED BY A COMMON BREATHLESS EXCITEMENT.

OLD ENEMIES EMBRACED AS FRIENDS, BRUSHING MOSS FROM EACH OTHER'S CLOTHING.

LONG SEPARATED LOVERS CLUNG TOGETHER GENTLY, LEST THEIR PASSION SHOULD SHATTER THEM.

(IF ONLY...)

AFTER THE FIRST EXUBERANCE OF THE RESURRECTION HAD ABATED, THEY QUIETLY DISCUSSED WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO MOST, NOW THAT THEY WERE ALIVE AGAIN.

SOME WANTED A JOB, AND A HOME, AND A RIGHT TO VOTE.

SOME OF THE WOMEN WANTED NEW CLOTHES AND SOME OF THE MEN JOKED ABOUT THAT. AS ALWAYS, THERE WAS AN UN-IMAGINATIVE MAJORITY WHO ONLY WANTED REVENGE...

...BUT THEY ALL WANTED LIBERTY. THAT MUCH WAS UNANIMOUS.

(FREEDOM...)

...AND, AS EVER, THEY KNEW WHERE THEY MUST GO TO ASK FOR IT.

(FREEDOM FROM THIS BLIGHTED SOIL, WHERE BURIED GRIEVANCES HAVE POISONED THE ROOTS OF THE WORLD AND ALL ITS CULTURES. FREEDOM FROM THESE TAINTED LANDS THAT BEAR SUCH SOUR FRUIT.)

SWAMP THING

CREATED BY LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON

STRANGE FRUIT

ALAN MOORE: WRITER

BISSETTE, TOTLEBEN, & RANDALL: ARTISTS
KAREN BERGER: EDITOR
TATJANA WOOD: COLORIST
JOHN COSTANZA: LETTERER

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CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

ALEC... THIS ISN'T JUST SOME *STUNT* TO DO WITH THE *T.V. SERIES* THEY'RE SHOOTING, IS IT?

THERE'S THAT *CLAMMINESS* IN THE AIR, LIKE WHEN WE TACKLED THE *MONKEY CREATURE.*

WHAT *IS* IT? WHAT'S *DOING* THIS?

I *FEEL* SOMETHING... IN THE *LAND* HERE... DIFFICULT TO *DESCRIBE...*

AS IF A *PATTERN* ... HAS BEEN ETCHED UPON THIS PLACE... BY *EMOTIONS*... SO *FIERCE* AND *CAUSTIC*... THAT THEY BURNED THEIR IMPRINT... INTO THE SOIL ITSELF...

"*AND EVEN THOUGH*... *ITS DESIGN*... *IS LONG SINCE* BURIED... *IT STILL* GUIDES THE FOOTSTEPS... *OF THOSE* WHO TREAD... *THE WORLD ABOVE.*"

B-BUT THESE *EXTRAS!* THEY'RE JUST *ORDINARY LOCAL PEOPLE* AND THEY'RE DOING SOME SORT OF *VOODOO* OR SOMETHING! IT'S AS IF...

HEY, *LOOK!* THERE'S *ALICE!*

ALICE...?

SHE HELPS WITH *LUNCH* AT *ELYSIUM LAWNS*. I MET HER OUT HERE THIS *MORNING*. MAYBE *SHE* COULD TELL US WHAT'S *HAPPENING*.

ALICE? *HEY!* WAIT *UP!*

ABBY... BE *CAREFUL*... THE *MALIGNANCY* HERE... IS GATHERING... ITS *POWER*...

"*CALLING*... *ALL ITS* CHILDREN... *HOME AGAIN*..."

HELLO, ALICE? IT'S ME. ABBY CABLE. YOU REMEMBER?

SALT... HAVE TO GO LAY SOME MORE SALT...

SALT? WHAT, LIKE YOU WERE DOING AROUND THE CEMETERY THIS MORNING? ALICE, LISTEN, WHAT'S...?

THE WIND WILLA BLOWED IT AWAY! BLOWED THE SALT PATTERN AWAY. I GOTTA GO.. GOTTA PUT DOWN SOME MORE...

"IT'S THE SALT, SEE?

"IT'S THE SALT WHAT KEEPS 'EM IN!"

ALICE, LISTEN... SOMETHING'S DOING THIS TO YOU. THIS PLACE...IT'S AFFECTING YOUR MIND...

LOOK, WHERE ARE THE ACTORS? MR. DEAL AND MS. LAMB?

INSIDE... WHITE FOLKS ALL INSIDE NOW... I GOTTA GO. GOTTA GO LAY SALT...

ALEC, SHE'S RAVING. CAN YOU FOLLOW HER AND SEE SHE'S OKAY? I'LL GET EVERYBODY OUTTA THE HOUSE AND THEN MAYBE WE CAN EVACUATE THIS PLACE.

YES... BUT WE MUST HURRY...

I SENSE... AN APPROACHING DARKNESS...

SOMEBODY COMIN', MR. JACKSON. I JUST HEARD THE DOOR, UPSTAIRS...

AHH, THAT WILL BE MY DINNER GUESTS ARRIVING.

I'VE INVITED ALMOST EVERYBODY. IT SHOULD BE A NIGHT TO REMEMBER.

OH, GOD. OH, NO. WESLEY, PLEASE...

CHARLOTTE, PLEASE COMPOSE YOURSELF. WE HAVE TO GO UPSTAIRS NOW, AND GREET OUR VISITORS.

AND PLEASE... TRY TO SMILE. I KNOW I SHALL.

OH, NO.

OH, GOD, WESLEY, WHAT DID YOU DO? PLEASE.. PLEASE, YOU CAN'T LEAVE HIM. YOU CAN'T LEAVE HIM LIKE THAT!

WESLEY, HE'S ALIVE!

OH, GOD.

STILL ALIVE...

GOOD. PERHAPS HE'LL TELL THE REST OF THOSE APES WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TRY TO STEAL A MARCH ON OL' WES JACKSON.

NOW GET UPSTAIRS AN' STOP WHIMPERING. I WON'T HAVE YOU UPSETTING OUR...

...VISITORS.

UM... HI.

MR. DEAL? MS. LAMB?

LOOK, I'M SORRY, YOU DON'T KNOW ME, BUT THERE'S SOME KINDA TROUBLE GOING ON OUTSIDE, AND I THOUGHT MAYBE IT WOULD BE SAFER IF YOU, UH...

UHH...

WH-WHAT'S...?

TH-THE HOUSE... IT'S CHANGING! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

MY GOD. SHE'S WEARING TROUSERS.

CHARLOTTE, IS THIS SOME FRIEND OF YOURS, THIS WOMAN WHO DRESSES LIKE A MAN?

CHARLOTTE? WHO'S CHARLOTTE?

LOOK, YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO FOOL AROUND. THIS WHOLE PLACE IS GOING CRAZY!

WHERE'S BILLY CARLTON? WASN'T HE IN HERE, TOO?

WILLIAM, OH, MY POOR WILLIAM...

HE SKINNED HIM. OH, GOD, OH, GOD, DOWN IN THE CELLAR...

SKINNED HIM WITH THIS.

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

GIVE ME THAT, YOU ADULTEROUS, SLAVE-LOVING...

AAAA!

SKINNED...?

OH GOD. OH, GOD, WHAT'S THIS PLACE DONE TO YOU PEOPLE?

DONE? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? ROBERTA-LAND IS OUR HOME. OUR WAY OF LIFE.

SHE PROTECTS US...

...JUST AS WE HAVE TO PROTECT HER REPUTATION FROM LOUD-MOUTHED OUTSIDERS WHO BUTT IN ON FAMILY DISAGREEMENTS.

OH, JEEZ.

LISTEN...PLEASE LISTEN. YOUR NAME IS RICHARD DEAL. YOU'RE AN ACTOR.

NONE OF THIS IS REAL.

UUH.

UUHHHH...

IS THAT SO?

SKSUK

COME ON...LET'S GO AND SEE WHAT ALL THAT SCREECHING AND HOLLERING OUTSIDE IS ABOUT. THOSE SAVAGES ARE KICKING UP A FIT TO WAKE THE DEAD...

OH, LORD.

OH, LORD, I'M SORRY. I'M TOO OLD, I'M TOO SLOW...

THEY ALL AWAKE. ALL OF 'EM...

PLEASE... Y'ALL GOTTA GO BACK TO SLEEP. IT AIN'T THE DAY. NOT YET.

D'Y'UNNERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYIN'?

CAN'T ANY O' YOU FOLK TALK NO MORE?

ALICE...?

ALICE... THAT YOU...?

DADDY?

OH...

OH, I REMEMBER... WE COULDN'T AFFORD NO PROPER PLOT, SO MOMMA HAD YOU BURIED IN THE OL' SLAVE GRAVEYARD...

I--I WAS A LITTLE GIRL. YOU USED TO SAY HOW PUH-PRETTY I WAS...

OH, DADDY...

DADDY, I'M ALL OLD! I'M ALL UGLY AND OLD!

WHY'D YOU HAVE TO WAKE UP AND SEE ME LIKE *THIS*?

ALICE... LITTLE ALICE...

COULDN'T SLEEP IN THAT PLACE... COULDN'T DECAY IN PEACE... NONE OF US COULD... TOO MUCH LEFT *UNSETTLED*...

TONIGHT... WE ARE GOING... TO DEMAND... OUR FREEDOM...

LET ME... WALK THERE... WITH *YOU*...

BEAUTIFUL ALICE.

BEAUTIFUL BABY...

THE PARADE MOVES PAST... AND DOES NOT NOTICE ME...

AS IF... I AM NOT PART... OF THE DREAM THAT THEY WALK SUBMERGED IN...

THE DREAM OF A DEAD PLACE .. FONDLY RECALLING OLD AND CHERISHED HORRORS...

THIS ISN'T REAL.

IT DOESN'T HURT.

I DON'T FEEL WET.

I'M NOT REALLY BLEEDING.

SHIK

UH...

MS LAMB?

SPROING

.SSSUMMP.

LISTEN, I'M GOING DOWN TO THE CELLAR TO GET MR. CARLTON, THEN WE'RE GETTING OUTSIDE.

NO! YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM. OH, GOD, DON'T MAKE ME LOOK AT HIM AGAIN!

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THEY SKINNED HIM!

SHIK!

WITH THIS?

CHEAP TRICKS!

CHEAP TRICKS AND CHICKEN BLOOD!

I'VE WARNED YOU PEOPLE...

I'VE TOLD YOU I WON'T HAVE THIS *DEVIL WORSHIP* AROUND *ROBERTALAND!* NOW PUT OUT THESE *FIRES* AND GET BACK TO YOUR *SHACKS*...

SPECIAL NIGHT FOR US, MR JACKSON. IS *MYSTÈRE L'ORIENT!*

ZOMBIE WALK TONIGHT.

ZOMBIE?

GOD, YOU'RE LIKE *CHILDREN!* DON'T YOU REALIZE THIS IS *1992?* NOW GET BACK TO YOUR *HOMES* BEFORE I *OPEN FIRE*, THE WAY I DID..

...THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED.

UH...

NO, NO, THAT *CAN'T* BE RIGHT... *THIS* HASN'T HAPPENED BEFORE. BUT...

...BUT I REMEMBER...FIRING ON THE CROWD...HIT A WOMAN, IN THE STOMACH, AND...

...AND THEN...THEN THE BLACKS ATTACKED ME, AND...FIRED THE OTHER BARREL, BUT...TOO MANY OF THEM...THEY...

THEY... BEAT ME...

...TO DEATH.

OH, GOD.

DEAR GOD, WHERE AM I?

YOU ARE BACK... IN THE PLACE... OF PAIN, WESLEY JACKSON...

WE ARE ALL BACK IN THE PLACE OF PAIN...

...BECAUSE THE PAIN... CANNOT BE BURIED... AND FORGOTTEN...

THE PAIN... CANNOT REMAIN IN THE PAST, OR HIDDEN BENEATH THE SOIL...

THAT WHICH IS BURIED... IS NOT GONE. THAT WHICH IS PLANTED... WILL GROW...

THERE IS A WEED... THAT THRIVES UPON NEGLECT, AND FLOURISHES IN DARKNESS...

UNTENDED, IT BECOMES A TREE OF NIGHT...

...AND ITS BOUGHS SAG... BENEATH THE UNBEARABLE WEIGHT... OF WHAT IT HAS BROUGHT FORTH.

WH- WHAT DO YOU WAN- WITH ME

WE WANT OUR FREEDOM...

AND IF FREEDOM IS NOT GIVEN... THEN WE MUST ALL... REPEAT THIS NIGHT OF PAIN AND SUFFERING UNTIL FREEDOM COMES. EVEN IF THAT TAKES FOREVER...

THE DEAD.. HAVE FOREVER...

THIS.. THIS IS MY LAND! THIS IS THE WAY OF LIFE MY FAMILY WORKED FOR.

YOU CAN GO TO HELL.

YOU... ARE THERE... ALREADY.

ALL OF YOU...

YOU MUST BREAK.. THIS TERRIBLE CYCLE

THE PATTERN YOU LAID DOWN SO LONG AGO HAS GROWN INTO A MAZE.. THAT TRAPS THE LIVING...

GET BACK TO WHATEVER HEATHEN INFERNO SPAWNED YOU, CREATURE. I WILL NOT HAVE THIS JU JU ON MY LAND!

KA-BOOM!!

AND THE ATROCITY THAT HAPPENED HERE.. MUST NOT BE REPEATED..

I WILL NOT. TOLERATE.

ALEC? IT'S OKAY! I GOT 'EM OUT! THEY'RE BOTH IN SHOCK, BUT...

OH, JEEZ.

SLUNCH

ALEC! OH, GOD, WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT HERE?

THE SHOT HAS BEEN FIRED...AS BEFORE.

BLAM!

IT BEGINS AGAIN...

NO!

I WILL NOT...

...ALLOW...

...THIS EVIL...

...TO CONTINUE!

NO! NOT MY HOUSE!

IT'S ALL THAT'S DEAR TO ME! YOU CAN'T...

CONTINUES ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

IF THE BAD TREE . IS TO BE DESTROYED... YOU MUST NOT BURY... ITS FRUIT...

YOU MUST BURN OUT THE ROOTS.

THE FIRE CONSUMES ME... CRACKLING LIKE A CURRENT... DOWN WIRES... OF SUMMER-PARCHED CREEPER...

FOR AN INSTANT.. I RECALL... ANOTHER MAN... WHO BURNED. HIS FEAR.. HIS SUFFERING... WELLING UP FROM MY BORROWED MEMORY...

HOLLAND.

HOLLAND DIED LIKE THIS.

THE RECOLLECTION VANISHES... INTO SEARING REDNESS...

I SEE WEARY CADAVERS... RUSHING TO EMBRACE... THE CONSUMING... LIBERATING FLAME...

I SEE.. A MANSION.. TURN TO BLACK CINDER WHILE A WHITE MAN SCREAMS WITHIN IT...

AND THEN GREEN.

ONLY GREEN.

THLEP!

SLUDD

GWIP

PNOC

I THINK *MOST* OF 'EM WILL BE OKAY. I FOUND *ALICE* AND SHE ONLY REMEMBERS IT AS SOME KINDA *DREAM*

THEY'LL *BLOCK OUT* WHAT *HAPPENED* HERE AND GET ON WITH THEIR *LIVES*.

THEY'LL BE OKAY..

HI.

Y'KNOW, YOU MISSED ONE HELL OF A FIRE

YES...

WHY, IS EVERYONE .. STILL STANDING AROUND?

THEY'RE IN SHOCK. C'MON... I ALREADY CALLED AN *AMBULANCE*. WE BETTER GET *OUT* OF HERE BEFORE SOMEBODY REALIZES YOU'RE NOT AN *HALLUCINATION*...

MOST OF 'EM.

BILLY? BILLY, MY LOVE, YOU'RE ALL RIGHT IT'S ME

IT'S ANGIE

MMMUGH.

BILLY I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO US.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOUR MIND BUT

MUHHUH

BUT OH GOD, THIS NIGHTMARE.. THIS HORROR! I LOOKED INTO THE HEART OF IT, BILLY, AND

AND IT KNEW ME!

UH

AUHUH

I KNEW WHAT I WAS, AND AND I'T KNEW WHAT I WAS, TOO, AND OH BILLY, I DON'T WANT TO BE THAT WAY ANY MORE.

BILLY, EVERYTHING FEELS SO MUCH DIFFERENT..

OOUH

AND I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU GET BETTER AND IT'S ALL GOING TO BE OKAY I PROMISE I PROMISE ALL THE HURT WILL STOP AND IT WILL ALL BE OKAY

OH, BILLY

OH MY LOVE

THEY WERE NOT... THE ONLY CASUALTIES

UM, NO... THE DIRECTOR, DENNIS LAWYER, HE'S IN REALLY PROFOUND SHOCK. COULDN'T EVEN TALK.

AND RICHARD DEAL... HE JUST RAN INTO THE HOUSE WHEN IT STARTED BURNING AND DIDN'T COME OUT.

I GUESS THE PLACE HAD A REALLY TIGHT GRIP ON HIM, RIGHT UP TILL THE LAST.

PERHAPS IT FOUND... SOME CONVENIENT FINGERHOLD WITHIN HIM

SOME ANKLE BY WHICH HE COULD BE... DRAGGED IN DEEPER.

YOU MEAN LIKE CONSTANTINE LEADING YOU INTO ONE INSANE SITUATION AFTER ANOTHER BY PROMISING YOU KNOWLEDGE?

YES.

YES.. PERHAPS... YOU ARE RIGHT..

I HAVE NOT... SEEN HIM IN WEEKS PERHAPS.. HE HAS ABANDONED HIS QUEST..

PERHAPS.. HE HAS FORGOTTEN... ABOUT ME..

MMM LET'S HOPE SO.

ARRY.? WE PT... THE DEAD CREATURES. ALL DESTROYED... IN THE FIRE...?

UH, YEAH I MEAN, THERE DIDN'T SEEM AS MANY BODIES IN THE ASHES AS THERE WERE LAST NIGHT, BUT...

YEAH YEAH, THEY MUST HAVE BEEN DESTROYED

WHERE ELSE WOULD THEY HAVE GONE?

AW, NO! THIS IS A DISASTER! EVERYBODY GETS DRUNK OR SOMETHIN', THE SET BURNS DOWN, THE LEADIN' MAN'S DEAD...

...AN' NOW SOMEBODY'S RIPPED OFF MY CAMERA TRUCK!

WELL, HIRIN' THESE KINDA PEOPLE AS EXTRAS, THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN. I MEAN, HELL, I AIN'T NO BIGOT, BUT...

AW, NO! SOME JERK WHO PROBABLY CAN'T DRIVE? IN MY CAMERA TRUCK?

WHAT IF THEY SCRATCH MY LENSES?

FERNANDEZ BROS. CINESERVICE

JUST OUTSIDE MONROE. 11:47 A.M....

NOW, LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT... YOU SAW THE ACCIDENT, AN' THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THIS THING!

THAT'S RIGHT! HELL, THEY WERE SWERVIN' ALL OVER LIKE THEY NEVER DRIVEN NO AUTOMOBILE BEFORE!

FERNANDEZ BROS. CINESERVICE

I WAS SOME WAY OFF. BUT I SAW 'EM CRASH! THEY WAS GOIN' ABOUT SEVENTY OR EIGHTY, I GUESS, AND, UH...

A-AND THEN, THEY GOT OUTTA THE WRECK, AND, UH...

AND WALKED OFF.

LAUGHIN'.

LOOKS YOU STRAIGHT IN THE EYE ...AND SPITS!

AFRICA BLOOD AND GUTS

SPRINGVILLE, ARKANSAS. 9:35 P.M.:

NO SMOKING

TICKETS

POPCORN

HELP WANTED.

HMM. WELL, NOW, AS IT HAPPENS, WE DO NEED SOMEONE TO LOOK AFTER THE TICKET OFFICE.

TO BE FRANK, IT AIN'T MUCH OF A JOB AN' WE HAVE TROUBLE KEEPIN' PEOPLE.

the first motion picture to require a face-to-face warning

may be the last shock film you will ever want to see!

twitch of the death nerve

THE FINAL WARNING STATION

NOW PLAYING

SEE, ALL YA DO IS SIT IN THIS CRAMPED LITTLE BOX AN' SELL TICKETS. A LOTTA PEOPLE CAN'T TAKE THAT.

TICKETS

ADULT $4.00

IT'LL BE FINE...

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

DAWN OF THE DEAD

WHEN... DO I START...?

WEEKEND MADNESS

SLIVER YOUR LIVER!

ILSA HAREM KEEPER OF THE OIL SHEIKS

NEXT ATTRACTION

WELL, UH... RIGHT NOW, IF THAT'S CONVENIENT.

BUT, UH, LISSEN... WE'RE KINDA SHORTHANDED AN' THIS IS A 24-HOUR JOINT. YOU MIGHT BE IN THERE A WHILE...

ALL WEEK... IF YOU LIKE...

ALL WEEK? NO...NO, I MEAN A LONG STINT WITHOUT A MEAL BREAK OR A BATHROOM BREAK.

twitch of the death nerve

BEST BUY POPCORN

$1.50

SO... DO I.

THIS...SMELLS... SO GOOD...

UMM...WELL, IT'S JUST ORDINARY CHEAP POPCORN. UH, LISSEN, WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED PAY...

NOT IMPORTANT... WHATEVER...YOU LIKE.

THIS... IS MY BOX NOW?

UH... YEAH. SURE. YOUR BOX.

LISTEN... I LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE. YOU DON'T WHINE ABOUT CONDITIONS OR UNION STUFF. THEY DON'T MAKE WORKERS LIKE YOU ANYMORE.

IN MY OTHER BUSINESSES I COULD USE TEN GUYS LIKE YOU!

OH...I THINK THAT...COULD BE ARRANGED...

THIS...IS MY BOX AND MY OWN... LITTLE WINDOW? THESE... ARE MY TICKETS?

UH, RIGHT. LISSEN, I GOTTA LEAVE... DINNER DATE. LIKE THEY SAY, EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY, FOR TOMORROW...

UH...

TICKETS

ADULTS $4.00

UH... F-FORGET IT. I GOTTA GO. I'LL SEE YA TOMORROW.

JEEZ...

IS IT THAT LATE ALREADY?

DRINK DEAD

NEXT ATTRACTION: WINDFALL

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Dear Alan Moore, Stephen Bissette, and John Totleben,

You know, SWAMP THING is actually a playful book. It plays with narrative structure and tone; the art is full of virtuosic flourishes; best of all, there is a quality of joy in the use of language that is both rare and refreshing.

So why am I nauseous?

Well, first there's the aforementioned art, with its lovingly and disgustingly rendered details. (Thanks, guys.) There's the "discorpsification" of our own Swamp Thing. There's the banality of Nukeface's mind. And there's the body count on the last page of #36; throughout the story, those flat newspaper bits played nicely against the general Gothic atmosphere, and at the last they slammed home with real force.

A friend of mine said he was glad to see you tackling a relevant menace, dealing with real nightmares. He has a point, and yet—is "The Nukeface Papers" really more relevant to the human condition (pretentious as that sounds) than the Abby/Arcane story, with its emphasis on the universality of evil and the redemptive nature of love?

Then again, the universality of evil isn't going to eat my nose away.

These larger issues, love and evil and involvement in the world, illuminate the Swamp Thing's saga. On this level, as well as on the level of warning, "Nukeface Papers" is as disturbing as anything you've done. The Abby/Arcane story was one of redemption as well as damnation. "Pog," tragic as it was, included the possibility of grace in the love the "Okefenokeeans" felt for each other, and in the battered endurance with which they continued their quest. There is no such grace in the "Nukeface Papers." The (human) world seems to have become spiritually as well as physically corrupt. Corporations, policemen, and children seem similarly disaffected. Wallace's care for his community proves as inadequate as his romantic love for his wife. Treasure's Christian love damns her unborn child. The bond between Swamp Thing and Abby remains true, but she is powerless to stop his death. We all know Swamp Thing will recreate himself, but, significantly, this is postponed until next issue; Swamp Thing's "death" is presented merely as one disintegration in a series of disintegrations—Nukeface's fingernails, the Monroes' marriage, Blossomville, the swamp. The center is not holding, and this decay of both social and natural community seems traceable less to nuclear waste than to the flaws of the human heart—which cause nuclear waste to begin with.

"The Nukeface Papers," like "Pog," could be called a portmanteau story. "Pog," both tribute and original story, became more than the sum of its two parts; it was a beautiful example of a story informed by nostalgia and admiration for another's work that nonetheless functioned entirely on its own. "The Nukeface Papers," both metaphysics and eco-horror, packed a wallop of sick humor, inescapable fact, and moral pessimism that was truly impressive. I wish it could make a difference in the world.

Boy, am I depressed.

Thanks for another wonderful story. See you next month, and the month after that, and the month after that...

Jillian Belfuss
312 3rd Street, #5
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Alan loves to make people nauseous, Jillian, and I'm sure he'll be glad to hear that he hasn't lost that inimitable knack. You see, I made the dreadful mistake of first reading the script of "Love and Death" (you remember, the first part of the Arcane trilogy, rich in bugs, blood, and corpses) while innocently chomping away on a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Well, let's just say that it wasn't the most appetizing of meals, but when they pulled me off the floor a day later, I emerged a hardened woman with a stomach of steel. Alan, of course, reveled in my reaction, and has been trying desperately every month to reach the peak in grotesque art descriptions. My stomach's still in rare form, Alan. Better luck next time.

• • • • •

Dear Alan, Stephen, and John,

I am a sophomore English major at Loyola University in New Orleans and I have read comics for most of my life. I recently started reading SWAMP THING again after giving it up with issue #7 because I found it had grown flat. I decided to pick up #26 for two reasons. First, it featured the Demon. Secondly, I had noticed that the covers were consistently getting better drawn.

I was very much impressed with what I read and was also surprised by the references made to Houma. I'm going to school in New Orleans, but my home is in a small town called Des Allemands, which is about twenty miles from Houma. In fact, my father was born and raised in Houma.

Besides the stories, I've also been paying attention to the letter column, but I haven't yet seen a letter from anyone who lives in Houma. After reading "The Rite of Spring" and "The Nukeface Papers," I knew I had to write.

You guys have perfectly captured the essence and ambience of the Louisiana swamp. And this comes from someone who spent much of his early years walking through just such a swamp. I've always been fascinated by the mood and atmosphere of the swamp, and here I was finding it in a comic I once gave up as dead!

The depiction of Houma (sketchy as it is) is also pretty damn accurate. Even though I haven't been to Houma in several months, I thought that the picture of the hospital in #34 was pretty realistic (if my memory serves correct). And the use of *The Houma Daily Courier* and *The Times Picayune-The States Item* newspapers in #35 and #38 gave an added touch of realism to those of us who live in the area.

Now, I want to know how a writer who lives in England and has only been to the U.S. once and two artists that live in Vermont and Pennsylvania can so accurately portray Louisiana. What do you guys use as references?

One final comment on the realism: I loved the splash page of #25. The catfish are great! My home town has the honor of being The Catfish Capital of the Universe. The free advertisement for one of the mainstays of our economy was greatly appreciated.

I won't close by saying good luck, you all have already had that. Just keep doing whatever it is you've been doing. And if you ever need any help with Louisiana references, just let me know.

Sincerely,
Donald Schouest, Jr.
Route 1 Box 68
Des Allemands, LA 70030

P.S. I believe "The Rite of Spring" is the most touching comic I've ever read. I even gave a copy to my girlfriend. Thank you.

Thanks for the vote of accuracy on Houma and the Louisiana swamps, Donald. Our creative team goes to great lengths to be as authentic as possible. In fact, Steve actually managed a little trip to Swamp Thing country on his way to Florida last year, where he took lots of photographs, did lots of sketches, spent lots of money on newspapers and mage-

zines, annoyed lots of people, and generally made a complete pest of himself. Believe it or not, we're still getting mail from you folks down there complaining about that weird Vermont guy who was found sloshing aimlessly in the swamps one night, mumbling something about Alec, Abby, and the pages being in the mail. The things some people do for art, I tell you!

* * * * *

Dear Slime-Mongers,

A few thoughts come to mind after recently experiencing your latest work of *swamp-muck*, adequately entitled "The Nukeface Papers, Part 2." They are: shocking; disgusting; gut-wrenching; emotionally-draining; horrific; and, of course, sheer terror. In short, I LOVED IT!!!

The grim and murky artistry of Stephen Bissette and John Totleben blends *sooooo* well with the exquisite writing style of Alan Moore. The outcome is a truly unique product that can be easily summed up in one word: *quality*. Quality, the one ingredient missing in the comic books of recent years. Quality, seemingly lost forever in an all-consuming wave of publishers stampeding towards higher sales figures and the almighty dollar. Fortunately, this is slowly changing. Lately, the old wave is subsiding, and replacing it a cleansing tide of freshness, laced with a touch of creativity, and all wrapped up in a big, bright bow of (you guessed it) *QUALITY*. In this tide of *rejuvenation* can be found such titles as THE TEEN TITANS; CAMELOT 3000; BLUE DEVIL; and, riding in on its crest is, of course, SWAMP THING.

Well, in summation, a threat: If you persist in producing such pleasurable works of fiction (?), I'm afraid *I'll* have to persist in reading them and recommending them to customers who used to *gag* at the thought of reading a *DC* comic. These same customers, should they decide to accept my recommendation, are *more* than pleasantly surprised at what they find. This too is slowly changing (thanks).

From behind the counter,
Jeff Volpe
Comics Exchange
825 Fredrick Road
Catonsville, MD 21228

We're not the type to pat ourselves on the back, Jeff, but if you need some more ammunition to convince your gagging customers that they might even enjoy a DC title, tell them that the Eagle Awards, Great Britain's famous fan organization, just recently voted SWAMP THING best comic of 1984 and Alan Moore as best writer. Thanks, you people o'er the Atlantic!

* * * * *

Dear Alan, Stephen, and John,

Having the same story told from different perspectives is not a new or innovative idea. As a matter of fact, it is not even an uncommon approach, but what is truly rare is seeing it done right. SWAMP THING #36 was done right. Still, more important than the way the story was told was that story's message. In SWAMP THING #36 I saw a man poison the book's hero and almost kill him. What is important to note here is that man was not a villain. Like the SWAMP THING, this man was a victim. This story pulled no punches or hid nothing. As readers we were shown how easy it would be for our own selves to become victims. We were told this through a very powerful story.

In this tale the real villains, like Nukeface, still run free. For myself what really brought this home were the excellent use of newspaper clippings we saw throughout the entire two-issue saga. As a matter of fact, one clipping on the very last page dealt with a power plant that was built only a few miles from where I grew up. As an even scarier matter of fact, to myself, is that in 7th grade our science class was given a tour of that plant and I thought it was the neatest place in the world. Yet, without a doubt, the scariest fact of all is that my sister now works there and I thought you'd like to know that she'll soon be receiving a copy of SWAMP THING #36 in the mail.

Thanks for Listening,
Adam Burchess
1004A Westover Dr.
Greenville, NC 27834

Many good points mentioned there, Adam, and you're not our only reader who recognized their hometown in the various newspaper clippings throughout the "Nukeface" two-parter. One reader (hoping for a negative answer) asked if those clippings were ALL real. Unfortunately, they were.

* * * * *

Dear Swamp Things,

It's been a long time since I've written to the makers of a comic, but I have to express my admiration for what you guys are doing with the extraordinarily rich character of Nukeface.

Since I picked up "The Anatomy Lesson," more than a year ago, and stumbled into this intense, entrancing drama which is the current saga of SWAMP THING, some bizarre and wonderful villains have menaced our hero. Woodrue was megalomania with a human face, and Arcane was malice incarnate. But it's your handling of Nukeface that has moved me to write this letter of praise.

A reader's reaction to Nukeface has (at least) four feelings involved, all of which are carefully balanced and orchestrated by Moore's script and the sensitive portraiture of Bissette and Totleben. Firstly, Nukeface is frightening, a ghastly forerunner of a poisoned future that's already peeking out through the newspaper headlines of today. Secondly, Nukeface is pitiful, because he suffers, and he knows not the wrongs he commits. He murders in innocence. He is one of his own victims. Like any drug addict, his radioisotope-saturated body is no longer his own. He's been taken over. Thirdly, Nukeface is funny, because his mind is too mundane to even realize what a strange train of events has swallowed him. Everybody is his old buddy, Ed. When Ed clams up and turns green, he's just being a partypooper. The pity and the comedy make the terror all the more terrible.

And lastly, Nukeface is familiar. He is us, the US, Everyman Americanized. Because he is terminally hooked on things that poison him and poison all that surrounds him. And he's too spacey to even know it.

Now our hero has bit the dust. And one has to wonder whether the forests and farmlands and rivers and oceans of the Earth will die the same way, by the hand—metaphorically speaking—of a crazy, patriotic old wino who would never hurt a fly.

Keep it coming, DC. We're with you all the way.

Yours for true,
Stepan Chapman
Portland, OR

The much-deserved credit for the Nukeface character goes to our illustrious inker, John Totleben, who, when not staying up all night to finish an incredibly late issue, dreams up strangely inspired characters. After all, what else is there for someone with the German surname meaning "dead life" to do in Eerie, coops, Erie, PA, right, John?

* * * * *

Dear Alan,

From the number of times you've had Swamp Thing die and come back to life (#20 and #36), you'd think he's Jesus Christ dipped in Lawn Gro. If you really want stories with "human resonance," deal with the finality of death, instead of checking in and out like a Holiday Inn.

Most of the stories are great, though.

Tim Puckett
2139 Hollinshead Ave.
Pennsauken, NJ 08110

Interesting analogy, Tim, and on that note it's time for us to be checking into the Holiday Inn.

* * * * *

NEXT: Experience the bizarre as a couple of local Louisiana folks get a dose of Swampy's essence in "Windfall"—and we're not talking about profits! See you then—Karen